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Please ask for:
Marie Lowe

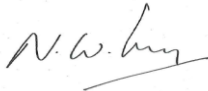
* Reporting to Cabinet

16 June 2017

Dear Councillor

You are requested to attend a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL CABINET HOUSING PANEL to be held on Monday 26 June 2017 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

Yours faithfully



Executive Director
Public Protection, Planning and Governance

AGENDA
PART 1

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN**

To note that Councillors J.Boulton and M.Perkins were appointed Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee for the 2017/18 municipal year at the Cabinet meeting on 12 June 2017.

2. **SUBSTITUTIONS**

To note any substitution of Committee Members in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 19 – 22.

3. **APOLOGIES**

4. **MINUTES**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2017 (previously circulated).

5. ACTIONS UPDATE (Pages 5 - 6)

Report of the Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning and Governance) which lists the actions from previous meetings and their current status.
6. NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED UNDER ITEM 14
7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To note declarations of Members' disclosable pecuniary interests, non-disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests in respect of items on this Agenda.
8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND PETITIONS

Up to fifteen minutes will be made available for questions from members of the public on issues relating to the work of the Committee and to receive any petitions.
9. FIRE SAFETY IN FLATS

Presentation from the Head of Property Services on fire safety in flats following the Grenfell Tower block fire.
10. PROPOSED SCOPE OF WORK FOR THE NEW CABINET HOUSING PANEL

Presentation by Executive Director (Housing and Communities) on the proposed scope of work for the new Cabinet Housing Panel.
11. OVERVIEW OF THE HOUSING SERVICE

Presentation by the Heads of Housing Services providing an overview of the Housing Service.
12. HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017 UPDATE (Pages 7 - 12)

Report of the Executive Director (Housing And Communities) providing an update on the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 which will expand the duties of Councils to prevent homelessness for all homeless households.
13. REPORT ON THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW STATUTORY ENFORCEMENT POWERS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (Pages 13 - 16)

Report of the Executive Director (Housing and Communities) setting out the introduction of new statutory enforcement powers for the Council under the Housing and Planning Act 2016.
14. SUCH OTHER BUSINESS AS, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, IS OF SUFFICIENT URGENCY TO WARRANT IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION (Pages 17 - 24)

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee is asked to resolve:

That under Section 100(A)(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting for item 16 (if any) on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Section 100A(3) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

In resolving to exclude the public in respect of the exempt information, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF AN EXEMPT NATURE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR

<u>Circulation:</u>	Councillors	J.Boulton (Chairman)	M.Holloway
		M.Perkins (Vice-Chairman)	K.Holman
		M.Birleson	S.Johnston
		M.Cook	H.Quenet
		J.Cragg	F.Thomson

Co-opted Members:-

Tenants' Panel Representatives

R.Read and B.Robbins

Independent Representatives

R.Paris and S.Smith

Executive Board

Press and Public (except Part II Items)

If you require any further information about this Agenda please contact M Lowe Governance Services Unit on 01707 357443 or email – m.lowe@welhat.gov.uk

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Agenda Item 5

Part I
Item No: 5
Main author: Marie Lowe
Executive Member: Cllr Roger Trigg
Not Ward Specific

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 26 JUNE 2017
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE)

ACTIONS STATUS REPORT

1 Executive Summary

1.1 In order to ensure that actions identified at meetings are completed, this report lists the actions from the meeting of the Cabinet Housing and Planning Panel on 19 April 2017, those responsible for completing each action and their current status.

2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Members note the status of actions which were identified at the 19 April 2017 meeting of the Committee.

Minute	Action	Responsible	Status/ Date Completed
98.	HOUSING WHITE PAPER CONSULTATION RESPONSE:	Head of Planning and Head of Community and Housing Strategy in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Housing and Community to make any requested changes and submit the Council's formal response.	Formal response sent May 2017
100.	HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW:	Head of Community and Housing Strategy	12 week consultation period to end 31 July 2017

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Part I

Item No: 12

Main author: Sian Chambers

Executive Member: Mandy Perkins

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL
REPORT OF DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITY)
26 June 2017

HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT 2017 UPDATE

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Homeless Reduction Act received Royal Assent in England and Wales on 27 April 2017
- 1.2 There have been recent changes to legislation in Scotland and Wales which are the precursor to this new Act. In Scotland 'priority need' has been abolished – therefore extending duties to everyone who is homeless, as oppose to only those who are considered to be vulnerable. In Wales additional homeless prevention duties were introduced in 2014.
- 1.3 Homelessness in England is rising. In 2016 59,260 households were accepted as statutorily homeless – this is an increase of 40% since the start of the decade. In the face of growing demand and a reduction in supply of affordable housing, councils have focussed on their statutory duties. The Homeless Reduction Act expands the duties of councils, requiring us to work on preventing homelessness for all homeless households.
- 1.4 A summary of the current duties and the changes being brought in via this Act are set out in Paragraph 3.7.
- 1.5 Whilst the government has promised some money for local authorities to reflect the new burdens placed on the council as a result of this change, the impact on the service is likely to be very high and the costs associated with the implementation are unlikely to be fully met from this money.
- 1.6 A project group will be formed to oversee the implementation, including the review of processes and enhancement of our homeless prevention services and rehousing options.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Members note the content of this report.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which started life as a Private Members Bill, gained Royal Assent in April 2017 and is likely to become law in 2018.

- 3.2 The Act places a new duty on local authorities to help prevent the homelessness of all families and single people, regardless of priority need, who are eligible for assistance and threatened with homelessness.
- 3.3 The Act places a greater emphasis on intervention and acting quickly to provide advice and prevent homelessness, rather than only intervening when it has become crisis point. It also extends the duties placed on the council to offer more help to people considered to be 'non priority'.
- 3.4 Under current legislation the council has a duty to make housing advice available universally to residents. It has specific duties to provide advice or seek to prevent or relieve homelessness where someone is threatened with homelessness within 28 days.
- 3.5 In terms of housing duties, currently the housing duty will only apply where someone is threatened with homelessness or homeless and they have a 'priority need'. This includes someone with child(ren) who reside with them (or could reasonably be expected to reside with them), someone who is pregnant or are vulnerable due to age or illness/disability or for another reason (such as domestic abuse or being in prison).
- 3.6 The new Act extends these duties, both by increasing the timeframe where help has to be provided, but also extending our duties to people who are 'non priority'.
- 3.7 The key changes are set out as follows:

Current Duties: Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002)	New duties: Homeless Reduction Act 2017
A duty to help someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 28 days	A duty to help someone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days
A duty to prevent homelessness for people considered to be in priority need	A new duty to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need
No current duty	A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
Duty to secure that advice and information about homelessness and prevention of homelessness is available free of charge to any person in the district	Duty to provide or secure the provision of a service, available free of charge to any person in the authority's district, providing information and advice on preventing homelessness, securing accommodation when homeless, the rights of persons who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and the

Current Duties: Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002)	New duties: Homeless Reduction Act 2017
	duties of the authority and any help that is available from the authority or anyone else for people who are homeless
Duty to provide advice and assistance	Duty to assess every eligible applicant's case and agree a plan. This would include any steps the applicant is required to take in order to secure or retain accommodation plus what the council will do. This plan must be kept under review until the council has decided a duty is no longer owed
Duty to provide interim accommodation where a person is eligible, homeless and in priority need	Initial duty owed to all eligible persons who are homeless. The authority must take reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for them for at least six months or such longer period not exceeding 12 months

- 3.8 The Act significantly extends the duties of the council to provide housing advice and homeless prevention advice and specifically states that the service must be designed to meet the needs of the following groups:
- People released from prison or youth detention accommodation
 - Care Leavers
 - Former members of the regular armed forces
 - Victims of domestic abuse
 - Person's leaving hospital
 - Person's suffering from a mental illness or impairment and
 - Any other group that the authority identifies as being at particular risk of homelessness in the district
- 3.9 The Act specifically defines a private sector tenant who has received a valid Notice of Possession as 'threatened with homelessness' thus tackling the issue of local authorities requiring bailiff warrants prior to offering any help to people who are threatened with homelessness in these circumstances.
- 3.10 For applicants who are already homeless or who become homeless at the end of the 56 day prevention period, the new initial duty gives the council a 56 day window in order to resolve the applicant's homelessness. The initial duty can be discharged by securing suitable private sector accommodation for a minimum period of six months.
- 3.11 The Act increases the opportunities available to the applicant to request a review of decisions made by the council at various stages in the application process. There are 33 points in the process where an applicant may ask for a review.

Depending on the number of requests received, this could have significant resource implications.

Implications

4 Financial Implication(s)

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, as it is for information only. However members will note that this new legislation places additional burdens on the council, including additional requirements in terms of how and when homeless prevention and housing advice is provided and an extension to the groups of people to whom we have duties.
- 4.2 The government has allocated a total of £61million per annum for two years nationally in new burdens funding to local authorities. We have estimated that we are likely to receive in the region of £60,000 per annum for two years, although this has not yet been confirmed.
- 4.3 Some local authorities are estimating that the changes to legislation may lead to a 50% increase in demand on current services. A project team will be set up to oversee the implementation of this new legislation and this will include a full review of current processes and consideration will be given to additional resources that may be required as part of this review.
- 4.4 Key figures relating to the current service are set out below:

Year	Total Enquiries	Total Housing Options Cases	Total accepted full duty	Total rejected (non-priority or intentionally homeless)
2016/17	1454	294	119	55

- 4.5 Further detailed work needs to be done on what the implications will be, but it is likely that more detailed advice and agreed plans will be required for a reasonable proportion of the people making initial enquiries. The new duty to 'help to secure' accommodation applies to all eligible groups. This would represent a 46% increase in the number of people who the council would have an ongoing duty to provide help to.

5 Legal Implication(s)

- 5.1 The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 gained Royal Assent in April 2017 and is likely to be enacted in 2018.
- 5.2 The government has said that guidance will be provided associated with the legislation.

6 Climate Change Implication(s)

6.1 There are no Climate Change implications arising directly from this report.

7 Risk Management Implications

7.1 The risks related to this report are:

7.2 Legal, Reputational and Financial

Legal – assessing and meeting the duties arising from the homeless legislation is a key statutory responsibility for the council. The new Act will bring about a significant change to the current duties and introduces many new opportunities for applicants to seek a review of the council’s decision(s). It is very important that the new legislative requirements are fully understood and implemented. A project group will be formed to oversee the implementation of the Act and relevant training provided to officers. A full process review will be conducted. Risk score subject to controls being in place: Likelihood Low; Impact Medium.

Reputational – it is important that the council adheres to the new legislative framework and that our staff and stakeholders are knowledgeable about our legal duties. Failure to implement these new duties adequately will be a reputational risk to the council and could leave us vulnerable to legal challenge regarding our decision making. A project group will be formed to oversee the implementation of the Act and relevant training provided to officers. A full process review will be conducted. Risk score subject to controls being in place: Likelihood Low; Impact Medium.

Financial – the Act places new burdens on the council and there will be an associated cost, which we cannot easily estimate at this stage. We will seek to mitigate this by reviewing our current team structures and processes and ensuring our service is streamlined; providing suitable training to staff and stakeholders; utilising the new burdens funding to support excellent service delivery; utilising the new homeless prevention grant to provide services where there are current gaps and/or where services need enhancing. Risk score subject to controls being in place. Likelihood High; Impact High.

8 Security and Terrorism Implications

8.1 There are no additional implications arising from this report.

9 Procurement Implications

9.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

10 Link to Corporate Priorities

10.1 I confirm that the subject of this report is linked to the Council’s Corporate Priority, meet the Borough’s housing needs, and specifically to the objective to Prevention Homelessness, as set out in the council’s Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018.

11 Equality and Diversity

11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been carried out in relation to this report as it is for information only. However an EIA will be carried out as part of the service review, prior to implementation of the new legislation.

Name of author: Sian Chambers
Job Title Head of Community and Housing Strategy
Date: 1 June 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 26 JUNE 2017

REPORT ON THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW STATUTORY ENFORCEMENT POWERS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Private Sector Housing Team is responsible for enforcing various legislation to ensure property standards and maintaining the mandatory licensing scheme for eligible Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- 1.2 The enforcement powers that are available to the team are predominately under the Housing Act 2004. These include the service of a variety of formal Notices and the instigation of prosecution.
- 1.3 The Housing & Planning Act 2016 introduced a range of measures to enhance the existing powers including;
- Civil penalties of up to £30,000 as an alternative to prosecution for certain specified offences
 - Extension of rent repayment orders to cover illegal eviction, breach of a banning order and certain other specified offences.
 - Database of rogue landlords and property agents convicted of certain offences.
 - Banning orders to prevent 'Rogue' Landlords and letting agents operating
- 1.4 This report sets out the current enforcement powers and the new powers.
- 1.5 The Government have made it clear that local housing authorities must develop and document their own policy to determine what type of enforcement powers is appropriate and how they determine the level of civil penalty and that they should decide on a case-by-case basis in line with that policy.
- 1.6 The Government have also indicated that they will issue further guidance to assist local authorities in the drafting of their policies and, subject to this and benchmarking with other neighbouring Local Authorities, a draft document will be produced and brought back to members for consideration.

2.0 Financial Implication(s)

- 2.1 This report is for information only but the revenue from civil penalties, and in some cases Rent Repayment orders, are retained by the council.
- 2.2 There is no effective way of predicting the amount of revenue that these measures will generate, but the government have made it clear that any monies recouped are ring fenced for Private Sector Housing Enforcement activity.

3.0 Recommendation(s)

3.1 That the Committee note the content of the report.

3.2 Members note that a further report will be brought back later in the year, setting out the proposals for a policy which will include the use of the new powers and the mechanism for calculating the appropriate level of civil penalty where applicable.

4.0 Legal Position

4.1 The Housing Act 2004 already provides a broad range of duties and powers for local councils to assist them in their enforcement actions including:

- The service of Formal Notices to require improvements to properties to reduce or eliminate risks to the occupiers.
- Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
- Regulations prescribing management in HMOs

4.2 There are presently two main sanctions that are available to the council for breaches of the legal standards; the necessary works can be undertaken and the costs incurred by the council recharged and/or the offenders can be prosecuted.

4.3 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 enhances the existing powers and in particular introduces the ability for the council to impose a civil financial penalty and/or apply for rent repayment orders.

4.4 These two powers became available on the 6th April 2017, they are not retrospective and do not apply to offences committed before this date. The other additional powers are scheduled to be introduced in October 2017

5.0 Background

5.1 The private rented sector is an important and growing part of our housing market, housing 4.3 million households in England. The percentage of households who are living in privately rented accommodation in the Borough has increased from 6% (2001 census) to over 14% (BRE stock modelling 2015). This is in part due to the social rented housing reducing and increasing house prices/significant reduction in mortgage finance, leading to a reduced owner occupation sector.

5.2 The borough has a significantly higher proportion of HMOs than the national average. The Stock Condition Modelling exercise undertaken by the Building Research Establishment in 2015 found that there were 2341 HMOs, representing 7.0% of the private sector housing stock in Welwyn Hatfield, compared to the national average of 2%.

5.3 At the time of writing there are 336 licensed HMOs and a further 44 applications being processed. This high number is unique within Hertfordshire.

5.4 The Government has stated they want to support the majority of landlords who provide decent well maintained homes, and avoid unnecessary regulation. However there are a small number of criminal landlords who knowingly rent out unsafe and substandard accommodation. The Government has indicated their commitment to

crack down on these landlords and disrupt their business models and has therefore introduced additional and enhanced enforcement powers for local authorities.

- 5.5 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced enhanced powers available to councils, particularly aimed at the control of rogue landlords and in particular the ability for the council to impose a civil financial penalty and/or apply for rent repayment orders
- 5.6 The council will be able to impose a civil penalty as an alternative to prosecution for the following offences under the Housing Act 2004;
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice
 - Offences in relation to licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation
 - Offences of contravention of an overcrowding notice
 - Failure to comply with management regulations in respect of Houses in Multiple Occupation
- 5.7 The maximum civil penalty that can be imposed is £30,000 per offence. The amount of penalty is to be determined by the local housing authority in each case. In determining an appropriate level of penalty, we must have regard to the Government's guidance. The decision to issue a civil penalty and the amount imposed can be appealed by the landlord to the First Tier Property Tribunal.
- 5.8 The Housing Act 2004 introduced rent repayment orders to cover situations where the landlord of a property had failed to obtain a licence for a property that was required to be licensed. A rent repayment order is an order made by the First-Tier Property Tribunal requiring a landlord to repay a specified amount of rent.
- 5.9 Rent repayment orders are being extended to cover the following situations:
- Failure to comply with an Improvement Notice under section 30 of the Housing Act 2004;
 - Failure to comply with a Prohibition Order under section 32 of the Housing Act 2004;
 - Breach of a banning order made under section 21 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016;
 - Using violence to secure entry to a property under section 6 of the Criminal Law Act 1977; and
 - Illegal eviction or harassment of the occupiers of a property under section 1 of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.
- 5.10 The application for a rent repayment order is made to the First Tier Property Tribunal and can be made by the council or the tenants. If the rent was paid by the tenants themselves, then the rent must be repaid to the tenant. If rent was paid through Housing Benefit or through the housing element of Universal Credit, then the rent must be repaid to the local housing authority. If the rent was paid partially by the tenants with the remainder paid through Housing Benefit/Universal Credit, then the rent should be repaid on a proportional basis. The amount of rent to be repaid is set by the Tribunal and can be up to 12 months of the total amount of rent paid for the property as a whole.

5.12 It should be noted that the only offences for which Civil Penalties and Rent Repayment orders can be used is non-compliance with an Improvement Notice and those in relation to HMO Licensing.

6.0 Policy Implication(s)

6.1 The Government has made it clear that local housing authorities must develop and document their own policy to determine when to prosecute and when to issue a civil penalty and/or apply for rent repayment orders and they should decide which option it wishes to pursue on a case-by-case basis in line with that policy.

6.2 DCLG has issued two generic guidance documents which the council must have regard to. They have indicated that they will issue further guidance to assist Local Authorities in determining the amount of civil penalty that is appropriate.

6.3 The council has a Corporate Enforcement Policy which is currently under review. This is overarching and details the remit and approach to which all council enforcement officers should have regard to. The additional powers will be included in the revised document.

6.4 Each service area has a bespoke Annex of the corporate document which details the specific enforcement powers and policies available to them. Following the publication of further government guidance and bench marking with other local authorities the Private Sector Housing document will be updated to include the protocol for determining when to use the new powers and set penalty levels. A report will then be brought back detailing recommendations for the new policy.

7.0 Risk Assessment

7.1 The risks associated with not delivering these services appropriately would have implications on resident health and safety, reputation and legal challenge. The risks will be quantified on the council's Risk Register.

8.0 Equality and Diversity

8.1 This report is for information only and therefore an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required.

8.2 There will be an EIA undertaken for the new policy

Name of author: Andy Luck

Title: Report on the introduction of new statutory enforcement powers for private sector housing

Date: 30th May 2017

Background papers:

DCLG - Civil penalties under the Housing and Planning Act 2016
Guidance for Local Housing Authorities – April 2017

DCLG - Rent repayment orders under the Housing and Planning Act 2016
Guidance for Local Housing Authorities – April 2017

Part I

Item No: 14

Main author: Dawn Murphy

Executive Member: Mandy Perkins

All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL - 26 JUNE 2017
REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITY)

GOVERNMENT FUNDING PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report relates to the ring fenced funding the government has allocated to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. The new grant gives councils more control and flexibility over homelessness budgets. It forms part of the Government's approach to tackling homelessness, helping both those at risk of homelessness and those experiencing a crisis.
- 1.2 In the Autumn Statement 2015 the Government announced that the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Temporary Accommodation Management Fee would be replaced by increased funding to local authorities to give them more control and flexibility to tackle homelessness.
- 1.3 On 16 March 2017, the government announced the allocations for the Department for Communities and Local Government's new Flexible Homelessness Support Grant which will replace the DWP fee from April 2017 this year. The total funding over two years is £402 million nationally.
- 1.4 In order to manage the transition to a new funding regime the government has ring-fenced the grant for two years to ensure it is spent on homelessness services. The allocation to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is £201,592 (2017/18) and £228,271 (2018/19).
- 1.5 The funding has been allocated according to a formula which reflects relative homeless pressures, while at the same time aiming to protect local authorities which currently use high levels of Temporary Accommodation.
- 1.6 Detailed work has been done on a series of proposed work streams/projects which have been identified as a priority for funding from this newly available sum.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That Members note the content of this report.
- 2.2 That Members recommend to Cabinet approval of the proposals set out in this report.

3 Financial Implication(s)

3.1 The council has been allocated £201,592 (2017/18) and indicative funding of £228,271 (2018/19)

3.2 The project proposal in this report will cost the following:

Project Proposal	Cost Year One	Cost Year Two
Tackling Rough Sleeping	£50,440	£52,000
Housing First	£86,700 (£67,500 if full recovered rents)	To be confirmed
Single Person's Housing Project	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Preparation for Homeless Reduction act 2017 (training and resources)	£10,000	Not applicable
Enhanced Spend to Save fund	£20,000	£20,000
Enhanced Incentives for accessing Private Rented Accommodation	£20,000	£20,000
Total Estimate	£187,140 (£167,940)	£92,000

3.3 Whilst this report sets out the proposals for utilising new grant funding, the government has removed the temporary accommodation management fee and so this is no longer available to councils which will have a negative financial impact.

3.4 The council's standard temporary accommodation charge is below the temporary accommodation ceiling for housing benefit and therefore the council has not been utilising the temporary accommodation management fee to date for these properties.

3.5 When the council has had to place applicants out of area within bed and breakfast accommodation the temporary accommodation management fee is utilised, but this is for only a small number of cases.

3.6 On that basis the removal of the temporary accommodation management fee has had a very small adverse financial impact.

4 Link to Corporate Priorities

4.1 I confirm that the subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority 'Help meet local housing needs', and specifically to the achievement of

'Prevention of homelessness' in line with the council's Housing and Homelessness Strategy'.

5 Legal Implication(s)

5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6 Climate Change Implication(s)

6.1 There are no climate change implications arising directly from this report.

7 Risk Management Implications

7.1 The council would face increased costs if it was not able to manage homelessness within its current temporary accommodation stock and had to utilise bed and breakfast or other expensive temporary accommodation solutions. This fund enables the council to enhance its prevention activity and to assist in helping groups that may otherwise not be helped.

7.2 There is a possible reputational risk if the council is not seen to proactively utilise this new fund in the prevention of homelessness. The government has ring fenced the fund to ensure that it is used for this purpose.

7.3 There has been a growing problem of rough sleeping in the borough and the council was recently unsuccessful in applying for government grant to provide additional resource to tackle this. One of the proposed work strands is to put in place specialist support to help reduce rough sleeping in the area.

7.4 There are further changes to the welfare system which will make it more difficult for single people under the age of 35 years to secure affordable housing from April 2018. One of the proposed work strands is to progress initiatives that will provide an affordable housing solution for this client group.

8 Explanation

8.1 The council has a good track record of housing advice and homeless prevention. Current schemes include provision of specialist money advice by the CAB, a 'Spend to Save' fund to help provide innovative solutions to prevent homelessness and a Private Rented Deposit Guarantee Scheme, which helps people access the private rented sector.

8.2 However there are some key areas which we have identified which will benefit from the additional resource the new grant funding provides. The project proposals are set out below

8.3 Tackling Rough Sleeping

8.4 The charity Resolve deliver a range of therapies aimed at helping people cease the cycle of alcohol / substance misuse. Supporting people (and their families) with issues around alcohol and any substance misuse problem, including prescription, as well as illegal drugs.

- 8.5 Resolve and Citizens Advice Welwyn Hatfield are two organisations which already have a proven and wide range of experience in working homeless people. This experience has been gained through existing services, but resources do not allow them to provide ongoing support throughout the journey, from having nowhere to live, through to securing permanent accommodation and maintaining a tenancy in independent living.
- 8.6 In order to enhance the current services available, it is proposed that Resolve's targeted outreach team will work with long-term/entrenched rough sleepers and those who have more complex needs as a delivery partner with the local authority and Citizens Advice.
- 8.7 Working jointly to provide the specialist engagement and support, the proposal is for Resolve's outreach team to provide the street work and locate people who are sleeping rough, either as part of their normal work or when referred by any agency, and bring them into the proposed service.
- 8.8 Citizens Advice will provide the ongoing advice, support and advocacy needed until the person is ready to live independently.
- 8.9 There will be a shared helpline to the service to ensure maximum coverage and the service will be seamless, regardless of which organisation has the first contact.
- 8.10 This service would be enhanced by offering rough sleepers and non-priority homeless people access to a wider service provision within local authority buildings, at Citizens Advice and Resolve. This could include locations such as Children Centres/schools as well as new specialist surgeries.
- 8.11 As part of the proposal, the council would provide accommodation to homeless people within our available temporary accommodation as a stepping stone to finding their own accommodation or to accessing suitable private rented accommodation secured by the council on a licence agreement. Support and engagement will be ongoing, with Resolve and Citizens Advice each providing their own expertise.
- 8.12 The cost to deliver this service is £50,440 in Year One and £52,000 for Year Two. This covers the full cost of running the project, including direct project costs and a proportionate share of each organisation's overheads.
- 8.13 £24,340 (Year One cost) will pay for Resolve to deliver 25 hours per week of dedicated outreach. This will pay the cost of two outreach workers providing 25 hours per week dedicated to this project working Monday to Friday with two Saturday sessions each Month and offering some flexibility on hours of work across the week.
- 8.14 £26,100 (Year One cost) will pay for Citizens Advice to deliver the advice and casework as detailed above. They are suggesting a minimum of 3 days per week as we anticipate a large caseload due to the length of time it will take to address the complex needs of this client group. Our intention is to proactively keep in touch with clients until they become fully independent so that we can support them with

events that occur along the way. This funding will pay the cost of employing a specialist adviser for 3 days per week.

8.15 Housing First

8.16 The second proposed project is to work with Druglink to support the Housing First model of supported accommodation. The model was developed in America to address revolving door homelessness.

8.17 It looks at housing people without pre-conditions of addressing their support needs or abstaining from drugs/ alcohol. Therefore the housing and support services are separated. The support services are permanent and long term – attached to the person rather than the accommodation.

8.18 Whilst support will be provided to help individuals tackle dependencies and assist people to become fully independent, applicants would not be expected to abstain from drinking and/or using drugs prior to being able to access accommodation. This model has been adopted elsewhere in the UK and it has been monitored and there is increasing evidence to show that this approach decreases long term rough sleeping, improves health and wellbeing, reduce drug and alcohol use and increases social interaction.

8.19 As an experienced housing provider Druglink propose to deliver suitable accommodation sourced from the private rented sector, with support for dependent drinkers. The project will work with these drinkers to reduce the physical and psychological harms associated with alcohol consumption. Individuals will receive access to medical assessment with the aim of reducing the need for a hospital admission and its associated costs to the NHS.

8.20 This service will provide a residential service that bridges the gap between community and acute units. It is a cost effective approach to the issue of supporting and promoting recovery to dependant drinkers and will be managed by druglink recovery experts partnered by local medical expertise. The project will monitor 'graduates' of the housing first service through continued outreach contact to assess their engagement with the treatment and recovery journey.

8.21 The estimated cost to deliver this service is £86,700, which covers securing the property rental and the Housing Recovery Worker for 12 months at £30,000 and the management charge at £20,000. It is proposed that the rental amount recovered be returned to the council on a quarterly basis. Should full occupation be reached, this has the potential to reduce the total project cost to £67,500.

8.22 We would propose to pilot this for one year with the proposal to extend a further year.

8.23 A separate report to this committee sets out information about the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and the implications to the council. However in brief this Act places additional duties on the council to provide advice and support to homeless people – both widening our duties to include all groups and ensuring that the council has services in place which enable early intervention.

- 8.24 In preparation for the Homeless Reduction Act we need to establish a competency framework and skills/knowledge/information toolkit and relevant training which is developed and rolled out to the team. Consideration needs to be given of any additional staffing resource that may be needed in order to meet the requirements of the enhanced duties set out in the Homeless Reduction Act.
- 8.25 Support for young single people
- 8.26 From September 2019 all single people under 35 years will only be eligible for housing costs at the same rate as local housing allowance – which is equivalent to a ‘Shared Room Rate’. In the Welwyn and Hatfield area this is £74.79 per week. The average cost of a studio flat is £125.00 per week in the private sector and £95.00 per week in the social rented sector, usually with an additional service charge – so way beyond the financial reach of someone of this age who is reliant on benefit.
- 8.27 We have been looking at how to address the housing need of people under 35 years who will be restricted by their benefit entitlement to a room in a shared house and are considering the option of setting up a Private Sector Leasing scheme and/or supporting the purchase of suitable shared accommodation properties by a Housing Association (which could be grant funded up to 30% via the council’s Affordable Housing Programme), to which the council would have nomination rights.
- 8.28 Both initiatives would be in partnership with a local housing association, who are able to vary the types of tenancies they offer, therefore providing a flexible model.
- 8.29 We are aware that there is currently a large number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Hatfield which have traditionally been used as student lets, but are no longer required for that group due to the expansion of university accommodation. We have been approached by landlords about leasing their property to us to use for single people. However it is proposed that we initiate discussions with local Housing Associations about the two possible options.
- 8.30 As part of this project, prospective tenants would need to complete a pre tenancy training course before accessing the accommodation. Research has shown that pre-tenancy training when made compulsory has increased tenancy sustainability.
- 8.31 Enhanced Spend to Save fund
- 8.32 We currently have a small budget, approximately £20,000, which is used by front line officers to prevent homelessness. This is used to pay for one off costs such as payment of a legitimate debt, providing a rental deposit or to meet travel expenses or in any legitimate way that can prevent that person becoming homeless or help them to access accommodation. We propose to use an element of the new grant funding to increase this budget to £40,000.
- 8.33 Enhanced support to access private rented accommodation
- 8.34 As individuals and families find it more and more difficult to meet the criteria set by landlords and agents, officers work proactively and innovatively in their efforts to

prevent homelessness and either sustain or secure privately rented accommodation.

- 8.35 Although there are budget limits to what we are able to assist with, all ideas to either prolong existing accommodation or secure alternative accommodation are considered. In all cases of homelessness, we ask the excluder whether there is anything that can be done to change their minds, whether that be a landlord or a relative, in the hope that any issues there may be can be resolved.
- 8.36 Financial assessments are also carried out to ensure that the accommodation that is secured/extended is within the applicants' means, and not simply providing a temporary solution to a problem which will likely resurface in the future.
- 8.37 Local research has been done to find out what incentives private landlords would consider, in order to enable us to access their properties for our customers. It is proposed that some of the funding could be utilised to put in place some additional incentives for private landlords as part of a package of support. This could include enabling access to property insurance, provision of white goods for the property and/or more flexibility over the level of 'rent in advance' that can be made available.
- 8.38 In addition Citizens Advice and Resolve can work with applicants coming into this service to secure items for a new tenancy. This will be done by accessing grants and other funding to purchase various items to be used in the new home, such as, white goods, kitchen utensils and furniture. Citizens Advice and Resolve can refer clients to grant makers, funders and other charitable organisations whose principal aims are to support people in need, such as, the Wellfield Trust, FReSCH Furniture Recycling and others in the locality.
- 8.39 We propose setting aside £20,000 to support access to the private rented sector, which will be reviewed.
- 8.40 The proposals set out in this report will enhance the skills and knowledge of the team and the help and support that is available to our customers, thus helping to prevent homelessness and where this is not possible secure suitable housing options.

9 Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 Resolve, Citizen Advice and Druglink will prepare the EIAs associated with the projects to ensure that they meet the needs of all protected characteristics. As these are new initiatives they will have a positive impact and will be accessible to all groups.

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